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Message Text

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FOR NEA ONLY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, TS
SUBJECT: TUNISIA-1978 COUNTRY REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES

REF: STATE 223421

INTRODUCTION

THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN TUNISIA IS A PATTERN OF CONTRASTS; EVENTS OF THE PAST YEAR HAVE HIGHLIGHTED SOME ACHIEVEMENTS AS WELL AS SOME SHORTCOMINGS. BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS FOR MOST TUNISIANS CONTINUE TO BE RESPECTED AND MOST OF THE CITIZENRY APPEAR CONTENT WITH THE PROTECTION AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY THEIR POLITICAL SYSTEM. DISCONTENT OVER SPECIFIC FAILINGS -- SOME VAGUELY PERCEIVED AND OTHERS MORE VIVIDLY OBSERVED -- IS GROWING HOWEVER. THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THIS DISCONTENT AND TO THE REASONS FOR IT HAS BEEN HESITANT.
--THE CENTRAL EVENT IN TUNISIAN POLITICS DURING 1978 WAS THE OUTBREAK OF CIVIL DISORDER ACCOMPANYING A GENERAL STRIE CALLED BY THE NATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (UGTT) ON JANUARY 26. THE STRIKE HAD LITTLE TO DO WITH SPECIFIC LABOR-RELATED ISSUES; AND REDUCETLOO BASIC ESSENTIALS, IT WAS THE CLIMAX OF A MOUNTING POLITICAL
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STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE UNION ANDTHE RULING DESTOURIAN SOCIALIST PARTY (PSD).
-- THE STRIKE QUICKLY DISINTEGRATED INTO THE WORST CIVIL DISORDER TUNISIA HAD EXPERIENCED SINCE INDEPENDENCE. POLICE WERE UNABLE TO CONTROL THE VIOLENCE, AND THE MILITARY WERE CALLED IN TO RESTORE ORDER. PROPERTY DAMAGE IN TUNIS AND OTHER MAJOR CITIES WAS EXTENSIVE AND FIFTY OR

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MORE PERSONS WERE KILLED IN THE DISTURBANCES. UNDREDS OF PEOPLE WERE ARRESTED, INCLUDING THE UGTT SECRETARY GENERAL HABIB ACHOUR AND MOST OF THE UNION'S TOP AND MIDDLE-LEVEL LEADERSHIP. SOME OF THOSE ARRESTED WERE RELEASED AND OTHERS, MOSTLY LESSER FIGURES IN THE CONFLICT, HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO TRIAL. SOME ACQUITTALS WERE GIVEN, AND THOSE FOUND GUILTY WERE SENTENCED TO PRISON TERMS RANGING FROM A FEW MONTHS TO FIVE YEARS. THE FIRST MAJOR TRIAL, BEFORE THE SOUSSE CRIMINAL COURT IN AUGUST, ENDED WITH THE COURT'S DECLARATION OF INCOMPETENCE AND OPINION THAT THE CASE WAS A MATTER FOR THE STATE SECURITY COURT.
--MOST OF THE CURRENT QUESTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN TUNISIA STEM FROM THESE EVENTS. THE AFTEREFFECTS OF JANUARY 26 ARE STIL BEING FELT,AND THE IMPENDING TRIAL OF THOSE WHOM THE TUNISIAN GOVERNMET DEEMS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISORDERS WILL PROBABLY AFFECT THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE FOR SOME TIME TO COME. THE EMERGENCE OF A POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND PUBLIC PRESS CRITICISM OF THE REGIME, INCLUDING CHARGES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, HAS ALSO BEGUN TO ALTER THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION--NOTED OVER THE LAST GENERATION FOR ITS RELATIVE TRANQUILITY.

1. RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON, INCLUDING FREEDOM FROM:

A. TORUTURE
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--MANY OF THE DEFENDANTS BROUGHT TO TRIAL IN CONNECTION WITH THE EVENTS OF JANUARY 26 PROTESTED, IN OPEN COURT, THAT THEY WERE TORTURED, MISTREATED, OR EXPERIENCED VARIOUS FORMS OF DURESS BY THE POLICE. THEIR STORES WERE SIMILAR, AND THEY MAINLY COMPLAINED OF BEING BEATEN AND SUBJECTED TO PHYSICAL ABUSE DURING THE EARLY STAGES OF POLICE CONFINEMENT. THE OBJECT OF THIS MISTREATMENT, THEY SAID, WAS TO EXTRACT CONFESSIONS WHICH COULD BE USED TO PROVE THEIR GUILT AND INFORMATION WHICH COULD BE USED AGAINST OTHER DEFENDANTS.
DESPITE THE MANY ALLEGATIONS IN COURT BY DEFENDANTS AND THEIR ATTORNEYS, THERE HAS BEEN NO INSTANCE IN WHICH TORTURE CHARGES HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN PROVEN. WE

ARE UNAWARE ANY HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY INVESTIGATED, HOWEVER, AND NO POLICE OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN PUNISHED OR REPRIMANDED AS FAR AS IS PUBLICLY KNOWN. IT HAS BEEN NOTED THAT NO DEFENDANT HAS SHOWN SIGNS OF TORTURE TO COMPETENT JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES. SOME DEFENDANTS HAVE CLAIMED, HOWEVER, THAT THEY WERE NOT ALLOWED TO SEE AN INVESTIGATINGMAGISTRATE UNTIL SIGNS OF MALTREATMENT HAD DISAPPEARED.

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--THE TUNSIAN LEAGUE FOR THE RIGHTS OF MAN HAS ASSOCIATED
ITSELF WITH A NUMBER OF SPECIFIC TORTURE CHARGES MADE IN
COURT AND ELSEWHERE, AND REPORTEDLY ITPLANS TO FILE
FORMAL COMPLAINTS AGAINST IDENTIFIED POLICE AGENTS AND OTHER
RESPONSIBLE PARTIES. OPPOSITION POLITICAL FORCES IN
TUNISIA HAVE ALSO TAKEN UP THE TORTURE ISSUE IN THEIR
NEWSPAERS AND THE QUESTION IS OF GROWING DOMESTIC INTEREST.
IT IS UNKNOWN WHAT ACTION THE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO TAKE IN
RESPONSE TO THESE CHARGES.
--WHILETHERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT
EXCESSES MAY HAVE TAKEN PLACE DURING POLICE INTERROGATIONS,
THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT TORTURE IS WIDELY

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PRACTICED OR CONDONED BY RESPONSIBLE TUNISIAN AUTHORITIES.
AT THE SAME TIME, THE TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO
TAKE UP THESE CHARGES PUBLICLY HAS NOT HELPED TO CLARIFY
MATTERS OR TO STRENGTHEN ITS DEFENSE. TO DATE THE
GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE HAS BEEN LIMITED TO UNATTRIBUTED
OFFICIAL PRESS AGENCY STATEMENTS DESCRIBING THE CHARGES
AS SELF-SERVING INVETIONS OF ITS DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN
ADVERSARIES.

B. CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT,
--IN CONNECTION WITH THE ABOVE CHARGES OF TORTURE,
DEFENDANTS IN THE UGTT TRIALS HAVE ALSO COMPLAINED OF
VARIOUS FORMS OF CRUEL AND DEGRADING TREATMENT WHILE IN
CONFINEMENT.
--CHARGES HAVE INCLUDED DENIAL OF SLEEP AND PROPER MEDICAL
ATTENTION, ISOLATION AND SEPARATION FROM COMRADES, AND
POOR PRISON CONDITIONS. THERE IS EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT
ONE ARRESTED TRADE UNIONIST, HUSSEIN KOUKI, DIED AS THE
RESULT OF INATTENTION ALLEGEDLY DESPITE REQUESTS TO SEE A PHYSI-
CIAN OR TO BE TRANSFERRED TO FACILITIES WHICH COULDPROVIDE

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SUITABLE MEDICAL CARE. THE TUNISIAN LEAGUE FOR THE RIGHTS
OF MAN CONDUCTED A NUMBER OF ON-SITE PRISON INVESTIGATIONS IN
LATE 1977. THE LEAGUE RECOGNIZED THAT IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN
MADE, BUT IT REMAINED CRITICAL OF DETENTION CONDITIONS IN
GENERAL. THE LEAGUE HAS ALSO CRITICIZED THE TREATMENT
GIVEN TO ERSONS ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE JANUARY
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EVENTS. THE GOVERNMENT THROUGH ITS NEW AGENCY AND IN
VARIOUS CONTROLLED PUBLICATIONS HAS STRONGLY DENIED
ALLEGATIONS OF MISTREATMENT, INCLUDING ANY RESPONSIBILITY
FOR KOUKI'S DEATH. WHILE SOME INUSTICES MAY HAVE BEEN
COMMITTED, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF A GENERAL POLICY OF
CRUEL OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERN-
MENT IS IN FACT MAKING EFFORTS TO IMPROVE ITS LONG NEGLECTED
PENAL SYSTEM, PRISON FACILITIES ARE STILL ANTIQUATED AND
CROWDED. AS A NORMAL RULE, HOWEVER, PRISON REGULATIONS
APPEAR TO BE FARLY LIBERAL. FAMILY VISITS AND FOOD
PARCELS ARE USUALLY PERMITTED ON A REGULAR BASIS.

C. ABITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT
--UNDER USUAL CIRCUMSTANCES, IT IS SELDOM THAT CHARGES
OF ARBITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT ARE MADE AGAINST THE
GOVERNMENT, EVEN BY THE REGIME'S HARSHEST CRITICS. IN
THE TENSE DAYS FOLLOWING JANUARY 26, HOWEVER, OVER A
THOUSAND ARRESTS OF SUSPECTED OR REAL TROUBLEMAKERS WERE
MADE AND SOME VIOLATIONS OF DUE PROCESS MAY HAVE OCCURRED.
MANY OF THESE PERSONSWERE RELEASED A FEW DAYS AFTERWARDS;
OTHERS WERE SUBJECTED TO QUICK TRIALS IN LOCAL COMMON
COURTS ON VARIOUS CHARGES OF RIOTOUS OR VIOLENT BEHAVIOR;
SOME WERE ACQUITTED; OTHER RECEIVED PRISON SENTENCES OF
FROM A FEW MONTHS TO FIVE YEARS. APPROXIMATELY ONE HUNDRED
FIFTY WERE HELD FOR LATER TRIALS ON MORE SERIOUS CHARGES.
THIS LATTER GOUP INCLUDED THE UGTT'S UPPER AND MIDDLE-
LEVEL LEADERSHIP AND MOST OF THE REST HAD DIRECT UNION
CONNECTIONS. ALL OF THESE PERSONS APPARENTLY WERE
SUSPECTED OF HAVING BEEN CLOSELY INVOLVED IN THE ORGANIZATION
AND EXECUTION OF THE GENERAL STRIKE WHICH THE GOVERNMENT
VIEWS AS THE CAUSE FOR THE ACCOMPANYING CIVIL DISORDER.
FORMAL INVESTIGATIONS WERE QUICKLY OPENED; THERE WAS NO
EVIDENT PATTERN OF PROLONGED ILLEGAL DETENTION. OVER
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HALF OF THIS GROUP HASNOW BEEN BROUGHT TO TRIAL. THE
CRIMINAL COURT OF SFAX ISSUED EIGHT CONVICTIONS FOR
TWO YEARS (THREE SUSPENDED SENTENCES) AND FOUR ACQUITTALS.

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A MISTRIAL INVOLVING 101 DEFENDANTS WAS DECLARED IN SOUSSE,
AND THEIR CASES MAY NOW GO BEFORE THE STATE SECURITY COURT.
IN ADDITON, APPROXIMATELY 40 PERSONS, INCLUDING MOST OF THE
UGTT'S FORMER SENIOR LEADERSHIP, ARE ALSO AWAITING SECURITY
COURT TRIAL. DEFENSE ATTORNEYS FOR THOSE DEFENDANTS
WHO HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO TRIAL HAVE ARGUED THAT THE
EVIDENCE DID NOT JUSTIFY CHARGES AGAINST THEIR CLIENTS
AND THEY HAVE PROTESTED THE LENGTH -- BUT NOT THE LEGALITY --
OF THE PRE-TRIAL ARREST AND DETENTION.

D. DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL
--ONE STRENGTH OF THE TUNISIAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM
IS THAT TRIALS TRADITONALLY ARE HELD IN PUBLIC. IN THE
PST THIS HAS BEEN TRUE FOR POLITICAL TRIALS AS WELL AS
ONES FOR MORE COMMON OFFENSES. THE RIGHT TO COUNSEL IS A
RESPECTED INSTITUTION AND FAMILY OF THE ACCUSED AS WELL
AS AUTHORIZED OBSERVERS ARE ORMALLY ALLOWED TO ATTEND.
FOLLOWING THE JANUARY 26 DISTURBANCES, HOWEVER, MANY PRISON
TERMS WERE HANDED OUT FOR RIOT CONNECTED OFFENSES AFTER
BRIEF DELIBERATION. SOME DEFENSE ATTORNEY OBJECTED,
CLAIMING THERE WAS NO TIME TO PREPAR OR PLEAD THEIR
CLIENTS CASES PROPERLY. ATTORNEYS PARTICIPATING IN THE
RECENT UGTT SFAX AND SOUSSE TRIALS, HOWEVER, TOOK OBVIOUS
PRIDE IN THE FACT THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO DEFEND THEIR
CLIENTS WITHOUT HINDRANCE FROM THE BENCH AND THAT
NOTWITHSTANDING DEMANDS FOR HARSH SENTENCES MADE BY THE
PROSECUTION, THE COURTS RENDERED THEIR DECISIONS IN FULL
INDEPENDENCE.

E. INVASION OF THE HOME
--THE PROVISION OF THE TUNISIAN CONSTITUTION GUARANTEEING
"PRIVACY OF THE HOME AND CORRESONDENCE"" IS TO OUR KNOWLEDGE
GENERALLY RESPECTED. IT IS GENERALLY KNOWN THAT POLICE
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ENTRY AND SEARCH CAN BE DENIED IF PROPER WARRANTS ARE NOT

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y TEXT (PARA 3A)

PRESENTED AND THE GOVERNMENT IS USUALLY CAREFUL IN
RESPECTING THIS RIGHT.

2. GOVERNMENT POLICIES RELATING TO THE FULFILLMENT OF
SUCH VITAL NEEDS AS FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION
--THE TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO DEVOTE OVER
TWO-THIRDS OF ITS RESOURCES TO MEETING THE MATERIAL,
SOCIAL, AND EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE POPULATION. EDUCATION
HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN THE MAJOR ITEM IN THE TUNISIAN
BUDGET, AND DEFENSE EXPENDITURES ONE OF THE SMALLEST. THE
GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN NOTICEABLY SUCCESSFUL IN OBTAINING
ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FROM WESTERN DONOR COUNTRIES, AND IT
IS CURRENTLY GIVING MAJOR EMPHASIS TO DEVELOPING INFRA-
STRUCTURE AND OCCUPATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE MORE
DEPRESSED RURAL AREAS IN THE INTERIOR. CONSIDERABLE
ATTENTION IS BEING GIVEN TO THE FIELDS OF LOW-COST
HOUSING, FAMILY PLANNING AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT.
THE WORLD BANK'S 1978 ECONOMIC REPORT WAS GENERALLY
COMPLIMENTARY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO IMPROSE
INCOME DISTRIBUTION AND TO HOLD DOWN PRICES FOR ESSENTIAL
GOODS. MANY INDEPENDENT STUDIES HAVE ALSO NOTED THE STEADY
INCREASE IN PER CAPITA INCOME, NOW AMONG THE HIGHEST IN AFRICA,
AND OF CONSISTENT IMPROVEMENT IN LIVING STANDARDS, HEALTH
CARE AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.
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3. RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES, INCLUDING:

A. FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, SPEECH, PRESS, RELIGION AND
ASSEMBLY
--OVER THE PAST YEAR TUNISIA HAS WITNESSED A DE FACTO
LIBERALIZAION IN DOMESTIC POLICIES OF UNPRECEDENTED
PROPORTIONS. THIS IS IN SPITE OF -- OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF --
THE UGTT/GOVERNMENT CONFRONTATION IN LATE 1977 AND EARLY
1978.
-- A NEW OPPOSITION GROUPING, THE MOVEMENT OF SOCIAL
DEMOCRATS (MSD), LED BY SEVERAL EX-PSD MINISTERS IS IN THE
PROCESS OF BEING FORMED. THIS GROUP HAS PETITIONED THE

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GOVERNMENT FOR FORMAL RECOGNITION AS A LEGAL POLITICAL
PARTY, AND IT HAS DRAWN UP A PLATFORM WICH HAS BEEN
PUBLISHED IN ITS TWO WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS, ER-RAI AND
DEMOCRATIE. THE MSD ACCEPTS THE CONSTITUTION AND SEES
ITSELF AS THE LOYAL OPPOSITION. ITS CRITICISMS OF
GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES HAS BEE INCREASINGLY
SPECIFIC AND DIRECT. WHILE THIS CRITICISM IS NOT
WELCOMED BY THE GOVERNMENT, NO ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN
TO SILENCE THE MSD OR TO MUZZLE ITS TWO PUBLICATIONS
WHICH ARE GAINING READERSHP THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.
OTHER INDEPENDENT PAPERS ALSO EXIST; ALTHOUGH THEY ARE
NOT STRIDENT IN THEIR CRITICISM, THEY ARE
ALLOWED TO PUBLISH WITHOUT DIRECT GOVERNMENT CONTROL.
IT WAS TWO OF THESE PAPERS (SISTER PUBLICATIONS) THAT
PUBLISHED FULL ACCOUNTS OF THE SFAX AND
SOUSSE TRIALS, INCLUDING THE NUMEROUS CHARGES OF TORTURE AND
MISTREATMENT NOTED ABOVE.
--IN ADDITION, THE TUNISIAN LEAGUE FOR THE RIGHTS OF MAN
HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY ACTIVE DURING THE PAST YEAR,
TAKING STANDS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES AND CRITICIZING
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VARIOUS GOVERNMENT PRACTICES. THE LEAGUE ENJOYS LEGALLY
RECOGNIZED STATUS AND THE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN NO STEPS
TO LIMIT ITS FEEDOM OF ACTION; REPORTS ARE FREQUENTLY
ISSUED AND PUBLIC MEETINGS ARE HELD. THE ORIGINAL TUNIS
CHAPTER OF THE LEAGUE HAS RECENTLY ORGANIZED BRANCHES IN
SOUSSE AND SFAX, TUNISIA'S SECOND AND THIRD LARGEST CITIES.
IT ALSO PLANS TO ORGANIZE CHAPTERS IN OTHER CITIES IN THE
COMING YEAR.
--ALTHOUGH THE CONSTITUTION PROVIDES THAT THE PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC MUST BE MUSLIM, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF
RELIGIOUS OR RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN TUNISIA. THE SMALL
BUT STILL IMPORTANT JEWISH POPULATION LIVES IN GENERAL
HARMONY WITH THE MUSLIM MAJORITY, AND ENJOYS FULL PROTECTION
OF THE LAW. TUNISIA REMAINS AMONG THE LEADERS IN THE
ARAB WORLD IN ITS PROGRESSIVE STANCE ON THE STATUS OF
WOMEN INSOCIETY. ALTHOUGH THE UGTT UNDER ITS NEWLY
ELECTED LEADRSHIP IS OPENLY SUPPORTIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT
AND THE PSD, IT REMAINS FORMALLY INDEPENDENT OF GOVERNMENT
AUTHORITY. STRIKES STILL OCCUR,ALTHOUGH LESS FREQUENTLY
THAN IN RECENT YEARS.

B. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY, FOREIGN
TRAVEL AND EMIGRATION
--FREEDOM TO TRAVEL IS GUARANTEED BY THE TUNISIAN
CONSTITUTION. WHILE THERE ARE VARIOUS CURRENCY EXCHANGE
CONTROLS AND REGULATIONSON WORKERS EMIGRATION, TUNISIAN
CITIZENS ENJOY GENERALLY UNRESTRICTED FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT
BOTH WITHIN THE COUNTRY AND ABROAD.

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C. FREEDOM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS
--TUNISIA REMAINS A SINGLE PARTY STATE, ALTHOUGH THIS
MAY BE CHANGING, GIVEN THE DE FACTO EMERGENCE OF THE SOCIAL
DEMOCRATS AND OTHER NON-PSD GROUPINGS. PARTICIPATION IN
THE GOVERNMENT PARTY, THE PSD, IS THEORETICALLY OPEN TO
ALL. INTERNAL DISSENT WITIN CERTAIN LIMITS IS ALLOWED
AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO EXPULSIONS FROM THE PARTY SINCE THE
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EARLY 1970'S. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF GOVERNMENT EFFORTS
TO RESTRICT PARTICIPATION IN THE MSD. FOR THE FIRST TIME
IN TWO DECADES, AN INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE RAN AGAINST THE
PSD CANDIDATE FOR A VACANT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEAT IN 1978.
ALTHOUGH THE TUNISIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCT) WAS DECLARED
ILLEGAL IN 1963, THERE IS NO PATTERN OF PERSONAL

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OPPRESSION AGAINST KNOWN PCT SUPPORTERS LIVING IN TUNISIA.
POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE PCT AS WELL AS OTHER RADICAL
DISSIDENT GROUPS REMAIN PROSCRIBED HOWEVER. WITH THE
EXCEPTION OF CERTAIN CONVICTED CRIMINALS, ALL TUNISIANS
OF AGE ARE FREE TO VOTE AND ARE ENCOURAGED TO DO SO. WHILE THE
LEGALITY OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE PREVIOUS UGTT LEADERSHIP
REMAINS TO BE DECIDED BY THE STATE SECURITY COURT,
THERE IS NO QUESTION AS TO THE RIGHT OF THESE INDIVIDUALS TO
PARTICIPATE IN TUNISIAN POLITICS PER SE.

4. GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE AND RECORD REGARDING INTERNATIONAL

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AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED VIOLATIONS
OF HUMAN RIGHTS.
--AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION
FOR THE RIGHTS OF MAN HAVE ISSUED CRITICAL REPORTS ON
TUNISIA DURING 1978. SEVERAL NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS
GROUPS AS WELL AS A NUMBER OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL
LABOR ORGANIZATIONS HAVE ALSO EXPRESSED VARYING DEGREES
OF CONCERN OVER ALLEGED HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR FREEDOM
VIOLATIONS. MOST OF THESE CONCERNS STEM FROM GOVERNMENT
ACTIONS TAKEN IN THE WAKE OF THE EVENTS OF JANUARY 1978.
--IN THOSE CASES WHERE THE GOVERNMENT HAS RESPONDED, IT
HAS GENERALLY TAKEN THE VIEW EITHER THAT THE REPORTS WERE
BIASED OR BASED ON MISINFORMATION. REPRESENTATIVES
OF NTERNATIONAL LABOR AHD HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS
ARE OFTEN RECEIVED BY HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, INCLUDING
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THE PRIME MINISTER. SOME FOREIGN OBSERVERS WERE ALSO PERMITTED
TO ATTEND THE SFAX AND SOUSSE TRIALS. THE GOVERNMENT
IS ON RECORD THAT IT WILL ALSO ALLOW FOREIGN OBSERVERS
TO ATTEND THE ACHOUR TRIAL IN TUNIS. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

HAS BEEN PERMITTED CONTACT WITH FAMILIES OF SOME OF THE
DEFENDANTS, AND IT IS KNOWN THAT REPRESENTATIVES OF VARIOUS
NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATIONS HAVE ALSO
MET WITH A NUMBER OF THE ACCUSED TUNISIAN TRADE UNIONISTS
AS WELL AS WITH THEIR FAMILIES.
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